

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, FR
SUBJECT: FRENCH INTERNAL POLITICS: PONIATOWSKI TAKES
COMMAND OF INDEPENDENT REPUBLICAN PARTY ON EVE OF
CHIRAC'S GAULLIST RALLY

SUMMARY: THE INDEPENDENT REPUBLICANS HAVE REORGANIZED
THEMSELVES UNDER PONIATOWSKI SO AS NOT TO BE OVERSHA-
DOWED BY CHIRAC AND TO MAKE AN EFFORT TO IMPROVE ITS SO
FAR DISMAL RECORD AS A GRASS ROOTS PARTY. END SUMMARY.

1. IN AN EFFORT TO PULL UP THEIR SOCKS ON THE EVE OF
CHIRAC'S MONSTER CONVENTION OF THE FACE-LIFTED GAULLIST
PARTY, THE INDEPENDENT REPUBLICANS HAVE ANNOUNCED A
REORGANIZATION THAT PUTS INTERIOR MINISTER PONIATOWSKI
BACK IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT. IN A PRESS CONFERENCE DECEM-
BER 2, THE IR UNVEILED ITS NEW SEVEN-MAN EXECUTIVE
COUNCIL HEADED BY PONIATOWSKI, AND INCLUDING THREE OTHER
MINISTERS (D'ORNANO, FOURCADE, BONNET), IR LEADERS IN
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THE ASSEMBLY AND THE SENATE (CHINAUD AND DE BOURGOING)

AND IR SECRETARY GENERAL DOMINATI. THE LATTER HAS CLEARLY BEEN DOWNGRADED ALTHOUGH HE CONTINUES TO HOLD HIS PARTY TITLE.

2. IN ITS INITIAL STATEMENT, THE NEW IR COUNCIL DECLARED THAT THE UNITY OF THE MAJORITY IS NECESSARY FOR THE FUNCTIONING OF THE FIFTH REPUBLIC INSTITUTIONS, AND CALLED FOR CONSTITUENT ELEMENTS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY TO RALLY IN SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING. TWO ITEMS CITED AS REQUIRING PRIORITY ATTENTION ARE THE FIGHT AGAINST INFLATION (I.E. BARRE PLAN) AND THE SETTING UP OF INSTITUTIONS ESTABLISHED BY THE TREATY OF ROME (I.E. UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE ELECTIONS IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT).

3. COMMENT: THE IR REORGANIZATION IS DESIGNED TO:

A. DO SOMETHING IN THIS OPENING STAGE OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN TO LIFT THE IR OUT OF ITS MORIBUND STATE AROUND THE COUNTRY.

B. GIVE THE IR AND CENTRIST SUPPORTERS HOPE THAT CHIRAC IS NOT GOING TO SWEEP THE ENTIRE NON-LEFT MAJORITY INTO HIS MOVEMENT.

C. SERVE NOTICE ON CHIRAC THAT IF THE MAJORITY BREAKS UP INTO TWO COMPETING FACTIONS, THEREBY UNDERMINING THE GAULLIST CONCEPT OF PRESIDENTIAL PRIMACY, IT WILL BE HIS FAULT.

4. PRO-LEFT OBSERVERS POINT TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TWO POLES IN THE MAJORITY AS THE FIRST STEP IN A SUICIDAL CONFLICT BETWEEN CHIRAC AND GISCARD. MAJORITY SYMPATHIZERS SEE COOLER HEADS PREVAILING ON BOTH SIDES, WITH VICTORY IN 1978 PREDOMINATING AS THE GUIDING FACTOR. EMBASSY IS AWARE OF THE FACT THAT THERE ARE SOME WILD GAULLISTS IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WHO WANT TO TEAR EVERYTHING DOWN AND REBUILD LATER. CHIRAC WILL ALSO HAVE A HARD TIME MAINTAINING A PSYCHOLOGICAL MOMENTUM IF THERE IS A FULL YEAR'S INTERVAL BETWEEN THE 1977 MUNICIPAL AND 1978 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS. BUT WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT OPEN CONFLICT WILL BE AVOIDED IN THE EFFORT TO DEFEAT THE COMMON PROGRAM.

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